

Orton CofE Primary School

Governors' report to parents, staff and friends, July 2016

Last year's brief report seemed to be appreciated as an additional communication and update so I hope that the following information and background will also be useful. It will be brief and, I hope, not too full of jargon and you are welcome to respond with any questions or comments via the website, via Parent Governors or whatever works best for you. Thank you.

Summer 2015

Soon after publication of last year's report, Alison Dear, who has two children in Class 2, joined us as a Foundation Governor (one appointed by the local church and Diocese).

Over the summer, Julian Thorpe continued his amazing Buildings and Grounds work and found a conservatory on eBay that has done a great job of extending and weather-proofing The Cube. We don't yet have a schedule for replacing the temporary classroom with a permanent one so the improvements are welcome and mean the space will accommodate Class 4 over the coming years.

Thanks also go to the Bawdens, Jill and Andrew, for their work painting the exterior of the school. As well as plenty of bright colours, there are now lots of stencilled insects, animals et al to be enjoyed.

Autumn 2015

Matthew Wray joined the governing body as a new Foundation Governor early in the term – one of the first to get involved even before his children are school age! He brings useful background for Health and Safety and other areas with his day job as a paramedic.

Pupil numbers continued to grow with new children joining classes right through the school. This is good for our sustainability at four classes but the governors have really appreciated all the extra work done by teaching and non-teaching staff to welcome and work with these extra children.

Autumn saw a fresh face in After School Club as Pat Mitchell joined Amy and the team. Her skills were also recruited into school later in the year as she took on some Teaching Assistant duties in Class 4. Sam McWhirter joined the staff as a TA in Class 1, maternity cover for Deborah Potter, and it was subsequently confirmed that Sam will continue, working in Class 4 from later in the year.

The school's new website www.ortoncofeprimary.co.uk took shape and was launched in the Autumn term after a lot of work by Paul Cornthwaite (a Parent Governor), Di Green and Vicky Percival (Clerk) to sort out the structure, content and all the documents that are required by law. Feedback has been really positive and, hopefully, Mrs Green is enjoying her Sunday evenings much more without spending them with the frustrations of trying to load new content on to a misbehaving website.

A big highlight of the term was achieving an Outstanding rating in the school's SIAMS inspection. SIAMS stands for the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools and it focuses on the distinctiveness and effectiveness of Orton as a Church of England school. The inspection involved a lot of work for everyone in school (as well as Rev Beverly Lock in particular from among the governors) so it was really encouraging for this to be recognised by the inspector.

Winter/Spring 2016

The Spring term was a short one with Easter being so early but there was still lots happening and, on top of the usual activities governors were dealing with the implications of Mrs Arnold's resignation.

Recruiting a new head is often described as one of the most important jobs that a governing body ever does and we all felt that responsibility. The work on the new website in 2015 suddenly seemed even more valuable as it helped us to create a great "shop window" to attract good candidates.

School was also the subject of a Health and Safety Audit early in the term and this coincided with several prospective new head teachers visiting the school! Thanks go particularly to Rona Arkle for all her work supporting staff in preparing for the audit and congratulations on a successful outcome.

By the end of the term, we'd met, interviewed and appointed Mrs Emma Pomfret as the new head teacher with effect from 1 September. She's been into school a couple of times already and will be teaching some lessons to classes 2, 3 and 4 next year so that she gets to know as many pupils (and staff) as possible as soon as possible.

Just two other things relating to governors happened in the term. We said "Goodbye" to Rev Beverly and welcomed Rev Sandra Ward in her place on the governing body and we were also aware of the need to survey parents' opinions with a questionnaire – this seems to come around so quickly each year but we're keen to gather feedback and keep the communications channels open.

Summer 2016

SATs, Class 4 residential and planning for all the happenings at the end of term (plus a lot of cycling, walking and scooting to school) all contributed to another busy term. The Finance and Staffing committee of the governing body (chaired by Nigel Coward) tackled the 3-year budget prepared by Mrs Dunning and Mrs Arnold and managed to keep the accruals made for IT equipment and a replacement classroom in the budget for the coming year. However, this approach to "saving" for the future is going to be tough to maintain so the work being done by Friends of Orton School, particularly on IT support, is very much appreciated.

The Potting Shed (a beautiful, light, spacious one at that) took shape and is in use by the children, especially for their work Gardening Club and for science. Thanks go to Jill Bawden for all her work on grant applications and fundraising on this and other projects and also, in this case, to Mary Jenkin who liaised with the Gibson family about a significant donation to the project from the sale of the village's Liberal Club building.

Unfortunately, Paul Cornthwaite resigned as one of our Parent Governors at the end of May, a few months short of the end of his term. Hayley Dixon has since been appointed in Paul's place.

So that more or less sums up another busy year from the governors' perspective. Congratulations to staff and children on their achievements (and perseverance with SATs and new curriculum) and very best wishes to those who are leaving, to the Year 6s who are moving up and on to secondary school and to Mrs Arnold as she moves on to new things too. Thank you for your continued support and for everything that you all do in and around school throughout the year. And have a great summer.

Sally Seed on behalf of the Governing Body